

## University of St. Thomas Law Journal

---

Volume 5

Issue 1 *Winter* 2008

Article 5

---

2008

# The Evangelical Debate Over Climate Change

John Copeland Nagle

---

### Bluebook Citation

John Copeland Nagle, *The Evangelical Debate Over Climate Change*, 5 U. St. Thomas L.J. 53 (2008).

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by UST Research Online and the University of St. Thomas Law Journal. For more information, please contact [lawjournal@stthomas.edu](mailto:lawjournal@stthomas.edu).

## ARTICLE

# THE EVANGELICAL DEBATE OVER CLIMATE CHANGE

JOHN COPELAND NAGLE\*

I. Overview of Evangelicals and Climate Change .....	57
A. Climate Change .....	57
B. Evangelicals .....	58
C. Evangelical Responses to Global Warming .....	61
II. Why Evangelicals Disagree .....	66
A. Theology & Ethics .....	66
B. Science .....	71
C. Law & Politics .....	75
1. Responding to Scientific Uncertainty .....	76
2. Political Strategy .....	77
3. The Role of Government and Other Institutions ....	79
D. Uncertainty Regarding the Nature of Jurisprudence .....	83
III. Lessons for the Future .....	85

In 2006, a group of prominent evangelicals issued a statement calling for a greater response to climate change. Soon thereafter, another group responded with their own statement urging caution before taking any action against climate change. This division among evangelicals is surprising because evangelicals are usually portrayed as homogenous and as indifferent or hostile toward environmental regulation. Yet, there is an ongoing debate among evangelicals regarding the severity of climate change, its causes, and the appropriate response. Why?

---

\* John N. Matthews Professor of Law, Notre Dame Law School: nagle.8@nd.edu. I am grateful for having had the opportunity to participate in the symposium *Peace with Creation: Catholic Perspectives on Environmental Law* at the University of St. Thomas School of Law and to present earlier versions of this essay at a faculty workshop at the University of Notre Dame and at the University of Minnesota's MacLaurin Institute's conference *Pristine Harmony: A Conference on Christianity and the Environment*. I am also grateful for the comments shared by Amy Barrett, Calvin Beisner, Andy Crouch, Nicole Garnett, Rick Garnett, Alex Klass, Lisa Nagle, Kris Ritter, Vince Rougeau, Aaron Simmons, James Tonkowich, John Wilson and Sandi Zellmer. I am especially indebted to Kris Ritter, whose extraordinary research on how evangelicals are approaching climate change contributed greatly to my understanding of the issues discussed here, and to Carlo Rodes, who researched the science and policy of climate change.

The answer to this question is important because of the increasing prominence of both evangelicals and climate change. After forsaking the political process for much of the twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> evangelicals have now gained significant political importance. In their own words, “never before has God given American evangelicals such an awesome opportunity to shape public policy in ways that could contribute to the well-being of the entire world.”<sup>2</sup> Evangelicals “recognize both our opportunity and our responsibility to offer a biblically based moral witness that can help shape public policy in the most powerful nation on earth, and therefore contribute to the well-being of the entire world.”<sup>3</sup> Those outside the evangelical community recognize the same phenomenon, albeit with varying levels of approval or disapproval. E.O. Wilson, the eminent Harvard biologist and self-avowed “secular humanist,” wrote a book-length letter to an imaginary Southern Baptist pastor beseeching the evangelical church to support environmental causes.<sup>4</sup> But Kevin Phillips is one of many observers who warn that the United States is becoming a theocracy, and Salt Lake City librarian Chip Ward has decried “zealous fundamentalist Christians” as “America’s Taliban, also known as George Bush’s base.”<sup>5</sup> The prospect of evangelicals dictating public policy is threatening to such observers, even when they might agree with the policy in question. These views prompted New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof to write about the need to “hug an evangelical.”<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, climate change has achieved a central role in political debates. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported in 2007 that the evidence for climate change is now “unequivocal” and is almost surely caused in part by human activities.<sup>7</sup> Six weeks after the report was issued, former Vice President Al Gore testified before Congress that climate change “is a planetary emergency—a crisis that threatens the

---

1. See generally GEORGE MARSDEN, *FUNDAMENTALISM AND AMERICAN CULTURE* (2d ed. 2006).

2. NAT’L ASS’N OF EVANGELICALS, *FOR THE HEALTH OF THE NATION: AN EVANGELICAL CALL TO CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY* 1 (2004), available at [http://www.nae.net/images/civic\\_responsibility2.pdf](http://www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf).

3. EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, *CLIMATE CHANGE: AN EVANGELICAL CALL TO ACTION* 3 (2006), available at <http://pub.christiansandclimate.org/pub/statement-booklet.pdf> [hereinafter *ECI CALL TO ACTION*].

4. E.O. WILSON, *THE CREATION: AN APPEAL TO SAVE LIFE ON EARTH* 3 (2006).

5. KEVIN PHILLIPS, *AMERICAN THEOCRACY: THE PERIL AND POLITICS OF RADICAL RELIGION, OIL, AND BORROWED MONEY IN THE 21ST CENTURY* (2006); see also Chip Ward, *Dumbing Down the Kids with Intelligent Design: How Wannabe Theocrats Wage War on Our Future*, *CATALYST MAG.*, Jan. 2006.

6. Nicholas Kristof, *Hug an Evangelical*, *N.Y. TIMES*, Apr. 24, 2004, at A17.

7. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Summary for Policymakers*, in *CLIMATE CHANGE 2007: THE PHYSICAL SCIENCE BASIS* 1, 5 (S. Solomon et al. eds., 2007), available at [http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1\\_Print\\_SPM.pdf](http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_SPM.pdf).

survival of our civilization and the habitability of the Earth.”<sup>8</sup> Both the IPCC and Gore won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. Nicholas Kristof again opined that climate change “could be the most important issue of this century.”<sup>9</sup>

The sudden prominence of evangelicals and climate change has also been matched by a recognition of the relationship between the two. One scholar observed that “it’s the evangelicals, with their close ties to the GOP, who ‘have the power to move the debate . . . . They could produce policies more palatable to people who have . . . been [un]moved by secular environmental groups.’”<sup>10</sup> Prominent environmental organizations are boasting of their connections with evangelicals interested in responding to climate change.<sup>11</sup> The political debate regarding the appropriate responses to climate change is still evolving, so garnering the support of a key political constituency is important. The emergence of evangelical interest in climate change has intrigued observers accustomed to linking evangelicals to social issues and the Republican Party.<sup>12</sup> For example, the policy director of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Richard Cizik, was pictured on the cover of *Vanity Fair* as walking across water.<sup>13</sup>

---

8. *Perspectives on Climate Change: Joint Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Energy & Air Quality of the H. Energy & Commerce Comm. and the Subcomm. on Energy & Environment of the H. Sci. & Tech. Comm.*, 110th Cong. 1 (2007) (testimony of Al Gore), available at [http://democrats.science.house.gov/Media/File/Commdocs/hearings/2007/energy/21mar/gore\\_testimony.pdf](http://democrats.science.house.gov/Media/File/Commdocs/hearings/2007/energy/21mar/gore_testimony.pdf) [hereinafter *Perspectives on Climate Change Hearing*].

9. Nicholas Kristof, *Another Small Step for Earth*, N.Y. TIMES, July 30, 2006, § 4, at 13.

10. Karen Breslau & Martha Brant, *God’s Green Soldiers: A New Call to Combat Global Warming Triggers Soul-Searching and Controversy Among Evangelicals*, NEWSWEEK, Feb. 13, 2006, at 49 (quoting John Green of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life). See Steven F. Hayward, *A Crossing of Green? Reflections on Eco-Theology*, ENVTL. POL’Y OUTLOOK, July–Aug. 2005, at 1 (asserting that “[t]he potential union of evangelicals, who voted for Bush by a four-to-one margin, and environmentalists, who voted for Kerry by a four-to-one margin, is the perfect man-bites-dog story for the media”). I do not want to diminish the importance and influence of other religious communities who are involved in the climate change debate, but their work is not the focus of my attention here.

11. See, e.g., Carl Pope, *Ways & Means: Riding the Big One: An Outpouring of Initiatives to Cool the Climate*, SIERRA (2007), available at [http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200707/ways\\_and\\_means.asp](http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200707/ways_and_means.asp); Larry J. Schweiger, *It’s Time To Be Bold, Together*, NAT’L WILDLIFE, June–July 2007, available at <http://www.nationalwildlife.org/nationalwildlife/article.cfm?issueID=24&articleID=1478>.

12. See, e.g., Juliet Eilperin, *Warming Draws Evangelicals into Environmentalist Fold*, WASH. POST, Aug. 8, 2007, at A1; Laurie Goodstein, *Evangelical Leaders Join Global Warming Initiative*, N.Y. TIMES, Feb. 8, 2006, at A12; Laurie Goodstein, *Evangelical Leaders Swing Influence Behind Effort to Combat Global Warming*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 10, 2005, at A16; John J. Fialka, *Religious Leaders Urge Senate to Act on Climate*, WALL ST. J., May 19, 2004, at A2. Legal scholarship is beginning to consider this unusual relationship, too. See Bruce Ledewitz, *Up Against the Wall of Separation: The Question of American Religious Democracy*, 14 WM. & MARY BILL RTS. J. 555, 561 (2005) (noting “the new interest by some evangelical Christians in the issue of global warming” as being a “surprising piece of evidence for the conclusion that religion now dominates politics”).

13. *The Reverend Richard Cizik; Lobbyist, Christian, Conservative, Washington Insider*, VANITY FAIR, May 2006, at 194. Jim Ball, the head of the Evangelical Environmental Network,

Some evangelicals, however, are notably cool to calls to respond to climate change. Three of the four evangelicals who testified at a June 2007 congressional hearing exploring the impact of religious beliefs on the response to climate change called for caution and prudence, not immediate action.<sup>14</sup> Further, the national media attention given to the unusual alliance of evangelicals and traditional environmentalists who oppose climate change probably exaggerates the support within the broader evangelical community for addressing climate change.

The evangelical community, in short, is divided among those who believe that action to combat climate change is necessary and those who are more skeptical about the need to prioritize climate change. The former group, favoring a more aggressive response to climate change, is led by the Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI), which was founded in 2006 and supported by dozens of evangelical leaders. The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA), founded in 2005 and likewise supported by many evangelical leaders, represents those who question the wisdom of expending significant societal resources on climate change. These groups reflect the broader divisions among evangelicals who are beginning to engage many environmental issues from their shared faith perspective.

This essay explores some of the possible explanations for the division among evangelicals with respect to climate change. Part I provides an overview of evangelicals, climate change, and how evangelicals are responding to climate change. Part II considers theology and ethics, science, and law and politics as the source of the differences among evangelicals regarding climate change. None of these explanations prove to be definitive, though contrasting perspectives on political engagement may offer the best explanation for the division among evangelicals. Part III suggests some lessons from the climate change debate for future environmental engagement by evangelicals and sketches my own tentative thoughts on the problem.

Throughout this essay, I hope to provide insight into the contemporary relationship between religious faith and public policy. My undertaking here is descriptive, not normative. I am hopeful that a better understanding of the contrasting views within the evangelical community will lead to more thoughtful responses to climate change, a more constructive engagement between evangelicals and environmental activists, and a deeper understanding of the relationship between religious teachings and environmental protection.

---

has been profiled in Rolling Stone, too. *The Prophet*, ROLLING STONE, Nov. 3, 2005, available at [http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/8742322/the\\_prophet/](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/8742322/the_prophet/).

14. *An Examination of the Views of Religious Organizations Regarding Global Warming: Hearing Before the S. Env't & Pub. Works Comm.*, 110th Cong. (2007), available at [http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing\\_ID=E39940af-802a-23ad-4371-252edd78194f](http://epw.senate.gov/public/index.cfm?FuseAction=Hearings.Hearing&Hearing_ID=E39940af-802a-23ad-4371-252edd78194f) [hereinafter *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*].

## I. OVERVIEW OF EVANGELICALS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Let me begin with a brief overview of the two aspects of my topic and how they fit together. I will first summarize the science and policy of climate change, next describe the evangelical community, and then explain how evangelicals have become involved in the climate change debate during the past few years.

### A. *Climate Change*

"Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer)."<sup>15</sup> The basic science behind the earth's retention of heat is as follows:

Energy from the Sun drives the Earth's weather and climate. The Earth absorbs energy from the Sun, and also radiates energy back into space. However, much of this energy going back to space is absorbed by "greenhouse" gases in the atmosphere . . . . Because the atmosphere then radiates most of this energy back to the Earth's surface, our planet is warmer than it would be if the atmosphere did not contain these gases. Without this natural "greenhouse effect," temperatures would be about 60°F lower than they are now, and life as we know it today would not be possible.<sup>16</sup>

These "greenhouse gases" include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases. Such gases exist naturally in our atmosphere. Changes in the sun's intensity, earth's orbit, ocean's circulation and volcanic eruptions are among the natural factors that can change the climate. Human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, reforestation, urbanization and desertification can affect the climate as well.<sup>17</sup> The IPCC concluded in 2007 that human activity "very likely" has caused most of the rise in temperatures since 1950.<sup>18</sup>

The effects of climate change could include flooding in coastal areas, droughts elsewhere, heat waves, cold spells, extinctions, and the spread of

---

15. U.S. Env'tl. Prot. Agency, Climate Change Basic Information, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/basicinfo.html> (last visited Jan. 23, 2008). The terms "climate change" and "global warming" are often used interchangeably, but I will use "climate change" because "it helps convey that there are [other] changes in addition to rising temperatures." *Id.*

16. U.S. Env'tl. Prot. Agency, Climate Change Science, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/science/index.html> (last visited Jan. 23, 2008); see Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Frequently Asked Questions*, in CLIMATE CHANGE 2007, *supra* note 7, at 93, 98, available at [http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1\\_Print\\_FAQs.pdf](http://ipcc-wg1.ucar.edu/wg1/Report/AR4WG1_Print_FAQs.pdf) (describing the greenhouse effect).

17. U.S. Env'tl. Prot. Agency, *supra* note 15; Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *supra* note 7, at 2–3.

18. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *supra* note 7, at 2–5, 10 ("Most of the observed increase in global average temperatures since the mid-20th century is *very likely* due to the observed increase in anthropogenic greenhouse gas concentrations.").

diseases. The IPCC's 2007 report concluded that "changes in arctic temperatures and ice, widespread changes in precipitation amounts, ocean salinity, wind patterns and aspects of extreme weather including droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves and the intensity of tropical cyclones" have already been observed.<sup>19</sup> Many people fear that climate change could work far more dramatic changes in the future. Al Gore's documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, for example, fears that climate change could displace twenty million people from Beijing, forty million from Shanghai, and sixty million from Calcutta and Bangladesh.<sup>20</sup> A number of scientists and policymakers, though, contest these more apocalyptic scenarios.<sup>21</sup>

The international community responded to climate change in 1992 with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which sought to stabilize greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>22</sup> The Kyoto Protocol, added to the convention in 1997, contains legally binding emissions targets for developed countries and encourages investment in emissions reductions in developing countries.<sup>23</sup> As of 2007, one hundred and seventy-five nations have ratified the Protocol.<sup>24</sup> The United States signed the treaty, but the Senate did not ratify it. In 2002, President Bush announced that the United States was withdrawing from the agreement because of the economic impact of implementing the changes necessary to reduce emissions and the failure to treat all polluting nations equally.<sup>25</sup> Alternatively, the climate change debate in the United States has turned to domestic solutions. That is the debate that evangelicals have entered.

### B. *Evangelicals*

Sociologist Michael Lindsay wrote that "[e]vangelicals are the most discussed but least understood group in America today."<sup>26</sup> Evangelicals are known by their religious beliefs. The term "evangel" comes from the Greek words for "good news," and a defining characteristic of evangelicals is to

---

19. *Id.* at 7.

20. AL GORE, *AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH: THE PLANETARY EMERGENCY OF GLOBAL WARMING AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT* 204–06 (2006).

21. For perhaps the most familiar and controversial account, see BJORN LOMBORG, *COOL IT: THE SKEPTICAL ENVIRONMENTALIST'S GUIDE TO GLOBAL WARMING* (2007).

22. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, *Framework Convention on Climate Change*, 31 I.L.M. 849 (1992).

23. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, U.N. Doc. FCCC/CP/1997/L.7/Add. 1 (1998), available at <http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/cop3/107a01.pdf>.

24. Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Kyoto Protocol: Negotiating the Protocol, [http://unfccc.int/Kyoto\\_protocol/items/2830.php](http://unfccc.int/Kyoto_protocol/items/2830.php) (last visited Jan. 23, 2008).

25. For the history of the American response to climate change, see generally J.B. RUHL, JOHN COPELAND NAGLE & JAMES SALZMAN, *THE PRACTICE AND POLICY OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW* 1329–48 (2007).

26. D. MICHAEL LINDSAY, *FAITH IN THE HALLS OF POWER: HOW EVANGELICALS JOINED THE AMERICAN ELITE* 2 (2007).

live as witnesses to the gospel message articulated in the New Testament and the entire Bible. According to the National Association of Evangelicals' (NAE) statement of faith, evangelicals "believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God."<sup>27</sup> At the risk of oversimplification, this view of scripture distinguishes evangelicals both from main-line Protestants (who regard the Bible as somewhat less authoritative and are more likely to supplement it with appeals to experience, tradition and other spiritual insights) and from most Catholics (who, besides being instructed by the Bible, seek to honor the past teachings of the church). The definitional difficulty is illustrated by the fact that some Catholics fit the description of evangelicals. Whatever the distinction from other forms of Christian belief, the supremacy of the Bible has obvious implications for evangelical attitudes toward public policy questions such as climate change, for guidance is sought from specific biblical texts and from the broader message of the scriptures. Evangelicals also "believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation."<sup>28</sup> Other central beliefs include the Trinitarian concept of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit; the deity of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit; and "the spiritual unity of believers."<sup>29</sup> Many of these beliefs are not unique to evangelicals, as I know well from my many Catholic colleagues at Notre Dame, but together they form the distinctive characteristics of evangelicals today.

Evangelicals are part of many denominations and many nondenominational churches. The Southern Baptist Convention is the largest evangelical

---

27. Nat'l Ass'n of Evangelicals, Statement of Faith, [http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=nae.statement\\_of\\_faith](http://www.nae.net/index.cfm?FUSEACTION=nae.statement_of_faith) (last visited Jan. 23, 2008).

28. *Id.*

29. *Id.*; LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 4 (defining "an evangelical as one who believes (1) that the Bible is the supreme authority for religious belief and practice, (2) that he or she has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and (3) that one should take a transforming, activist approach to faith"); MARK A. NOLL, *THE RISE OF EVANGELICALISM: THE AGE OF EDWARDS, WHITEFIELD AND THE WESLEYS* 15 (2003) (describing the "unswerving belief in the need for conversion (the new birth) and the necessity of a new life of active holiness (the power of godliness)" as the "foundation" of the evangelical movement); David Skeel, *The Unbearable Lightness of Christian Legal Scholarship* 1 (U. Pa. L. Sch., Public Law Working Paper No. 06-37, 2007), available at <http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=929850> (citing David Bebbington's understanding of evangelicals as "characterized by a commitment to (1) the authority of the Bible, (2) the cross (the belief that salvation is only possible through the atoning work of Jesus Christ), (3) conversion (a believer must, like Jimmy Carter, be 'born again'), and (4) activism (in evangelism, missions, and social work)"); D.W. BEBBINGTON, *EVANGELICALISM IN MODERN BRITAIN: A HISTORY FROM THE 1730S TO THE 1980S* 2-3 (1989); The Barna Group, *Americans Are Most Worried About Children's Future*, *THE BARN UPDATE*, Aug. 20, 2007, available at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=277> (defining evangelicals as those who (1) are born again, (2) regard their faith as very important, (3) have a responsibility to share their beliefs, (4) believe that Satan exists, (5) believe that salvation comes through faith not works, (6) believe that Jesus lived a sinless life, (7) believe that the Bible is wholly accurate, and (8) view God as all-knowing and all-powerful) [hereinafter *Americans Are Most Worried*].



church in the United States, followed by a number of African-American denominations. Evangelicals are also active within mainline Protestant churches that do not share their theological beliefs. Evangelicals are particularly active in “parachurch” organizations that transcend denominations and individual congregations, including relief organizations such as World Vision, youth ministries such as Young Life, and prison ministries such as Prison Fellowship (founded by Chuck Colson in the aftermath of his conversion and imprisonment related to the Watergate scandal).<sup>30</sup>

Historically, evangelicals were politically active during the nineteenth century, when they comprised the dominant religious community in the United States. Evangelical influence began to wane after the Civil War, and a series of events coinciding with the Scopes trial of the 1920s convinced evangelicals to withdraw from the public square.<sup>31</sup> Their reengagement began during the late 1940s, thanks to such figures as Christianity Today founder Carl Henry, and it quickly expanded in the 1970s in the aftermath of controversial Supreme Court decisions involving school prayer and abortion.<sup>32</sup>

Evangelicals have gained a high political profile, typically associated with issues such as abortion and international religious freedom. Lindsay reported, however, that “there remains a vibrant constituency of liberal or progressive evangelicals that has been around for decades.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, “the movement has been the site of deep divisions, several of which have political consequences.”<sup>34</sup> Lindsay explained some of these divisions by distinguishing between “populist evangelicals” and “cosmopolitan evangelicals.” Populist evangelicals rely upon large campaigns for religious and political actions, derive their authority from the evangelical subculture, and see traditional believers as good and secular activists as bad. Cosmopolitan evangelicals enjoy greater affluence and access to powerful institutions, are eager to act on their faith outside of the evangelical subculture, and seek to influence society and gain legitimacy over the longer term.<sup>35</sup> Tensions exist between evangelicals along these lines, but political differences “do not follow the cosmopolitan/populist divide.”<sup>36</sup> Climate change

---

30. See generally Walter Russell Mead, *God's Country?*, FOREIGN AFF., Sept.–Oct. 2006, at 24 (distinguishing evangelicals from fundamentalists and liberals).

31. See generally MARSDEN, *supra* note 1 (describing evangelical social engagement in the early twentieth century).

32. DAVID W. BEBBINGTON, *THE DOMINANCE OF EVANGELICALISM: THE AGE OF SPURGEON AND MOODY* (2005); MARK A. NOLL, *AMERICA'S GOD: FROM JONATHAN EDWARDS TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN* (2002); DOUGLAS A. SWEENEY, *THE AMERICAN EVANGELICAL STORY: A HISTORY OF THE MOVEMENT* (2005). See Skeel, *supra* note 29, at 13–17 (summarizing the fall and rise of evangelical activism during the twentieth century). More detailed accounts of this history appear in MARSDEN, *supra* note 1.

33. LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 27–28.

34. *Id.* at 62.

35. See *id.* at 218–21.

36. *Id.* at 221.

presents a fascinating test case for how evangelicals use their newfound power and the causes for which it should be used.

### C. *Evangelical Responses to Global Warming*

Like the broader Christian community, evangelicals were late to address environmental issues. Lynn White, Jr. offered the most famous explanation in his 1967 *Science* article "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," which blamed Christian teaching for encouraging an attitude of unlimited exploitation of the natural world.<sup>37</sup> White's thesis has been subjected to numerous theological and historical critiques in the past forty years, but whatever its accuracy, the claim that Christianity (and Christians) are unconcerned about the environment has prompted a growing literature exploring the proper relationship between Christian teaching and the environment.<sup>38</sup>

Christian environmental thinking began with the innumerable biblical texts involving the creation of the earth and all of its creatures, the relationship of the people to their often hostile environment, the rules for treating animals and the land, and the rich imagery contained in the Psalms and other books. In America, the landscape paintings of Thomas Cole and writings of wilderness enthusiast John Muir were deeply influenced by Christian thought, albeit in different ways, yet the Christian community played only a modest role in the development of modern environmental law during the last half of the twentieth century. There were some exceptions, including the Christian imagery voiced by numerous witnesses in the hearings on the proposed Wilderness Act of 1964<sup>39</sup> and Francis Schaeffer's 1970 book warning of Pollution and the Death of Man.<sup>40</sup> Such exceptions notwithstanding, Christians and Christian teaching were absent from most of the recent debates about environmental law.

The origins of evangelical interest in environmental issues, and climate change in particular, are found in several events that occurred during the past fifteen years. The Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) was formed in 1993, and one year later it worked to support the Endangered Species Act and prevent changes it feared would weaken the law.<sup>41</sup> In 2000, a group of more conservative evangelicals issued the Cornwall Declaration,

37. Lynn White, Jr., *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*, 155 *SCIENCE* 1203 (1967).

38. The best of this abundant literature includes NORMAN WIRZBA, *THE PARADISE OF GOD: RENEWING RELIGION IN AN ECOLOGICAL AGE* (2003); ALISTER MCGRATH, *THE REENCHANTMENT OF NATURE: THE DENIAL OF RELIGION AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS* (2002); STEVEN BOUMAPREDIGER, *FOR THE BEAUTY OF THE EARTH: A CHRISTIAN VISION FOR CREATION CARE* (2001); ROBERT BOOTH FOWLER, *THE GREENING OF PROTESTANT THOUGHT* (1995); and JAMES A. NASH, *LOVING NATURE: ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY AND CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY* (1991).

39. See John Copeland Nagle, *The Spiritual Value of Wilderness*, 35 *ENVTL. L.* 955 (2005).

40. FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER, *POLLUTION AND THE DEATH OF MAN: THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF ECOLOGY* (1970).

41. See John Copeland Nagle, *Playing Noah*, 82 *MINN. L. REV.* 1171 (1998).

which acknowledged the need to address environmental problems but resisted greater governmental regulation. The declaration identified “three areas of common misunderstanding” that contradicted the goal of relying upon “sound theology and sound science” to guide public policymaking.<sup>42</sup> They first criticized the view of people as “consumers and polluters” instead of as “producers and stewards,” and the resulting failure to recognize “our potential, as bearers of God’s image, to add to the earth’s abundance.”<sup>43</sup> A second argument favored active human shaping of creation instead of leaving nature untrammelled by man. In other words, “human stewardship that unlocks the potential in creation for all the earth’s inhabitants” is “good.”<sup>44</sup> The Cornwall Declaration’s third claim sought to distinguish environmental concerns that “are well founded and serious” from those that “are without foundation or greatly exaggerated,” listing “fears of destructive manmade global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species lost” among the latter.<sup>45</sup>

EEN returned to the spotlight in 2002 with its “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign against SUVs and excessive car usage.<sup>46</sup> Then, in 2005, the Interfaith Stewardship Alliance (ISA) was formed to build upon the principles articulated in the Cornwall Declaration. The ISA published *An Examination of the Scientific, Ethical and Theological Implications of Climate Change Policy*, containing essays written by climate scientist Roy Spencer, energy and environmental policy analyst Paul Driessen, and Knox Theological Seminary professor Calvin Beisner.<sup>47</sup> Spencer questioned the certainty of the scientific evidence linking human activities to climate change. Indeed, he emphasized that “much faith is required to extrapolate our current level of climate understanding to predictions of future warning.”<sup>48</sup> Driessen argued that government regulation of greenhouse gas emissions could wreak havoc on the well-being of the poor around the world.<sup>49</sup> Beisner counseled prudence in responding to climate change, and he advised Christians to more carefully explore the biblical principles regarding

---

42. CORNWALL ALLIANCE FOR THE STEWARDSHIP OF CREATION, *THE CORNWALL DECLARATION ON ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP 1* (2000), <http://www.cornwallalliance.org/docs/the-cornwall-declaration-on-environmental-stewardship.pdf> (last visited Feb. 7, 2008) [hereinafter CORNWALL DECLARATION].

43. *Id.*

44. *Id.*

45. *Id.*

46. Evangelical Env'tl. Network, *What Would Jesus Drive?*, <http://www.whatwouldjesusdrive.org/intro.php> (last visited Jan. 27, 2007).

47. ROY W. SPENCER ET AL., *AN EXAMINATION OF THE SCIENTIFIC, ETHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE POLICY* (2005), available at [http://www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/ISA\\_Climate\\_Change.pdf](http://www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/ISA_Climate_Change.pdf) [hereinafter ISA EXAMINATION].

48. Roy W. Spencer, *Global Warming: How Much of a Threat?*, in ISA EXAMINATION, *supra* note 47, at 6.

49. Paul Driessen, *Global Warming and the Poor*, in ISA EXAMINATION, *supra* note 47, at 8.

creation “before we venture to advise the world about environmental policy.”<sup>50</sup>

The climate change debate among evangelicals heated up in 2006. The proponents of responding to climate change struck first. In January 2006, the newly created Evangelical Climate Initiative (ECI) released a report entitled *Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action*.<sup>51</sup> The report advanced four claims. First, it acknowledged that “[h]uman-induced climate change is real.”<sup>52</sup> It next recognized that “[t]he consequences of climate change will be significant, and will hit the poor the hardest.”<sup>53</sup> The third claim was that “Christian moral convictions demand our response to the climate change problem.”<sup>54</sup> The report concluded that “[t]he need to act now is urgent. Governments, businesses, churches, and individuals all have a role to play in addressing climate changes—starting now.”<sup>55</sup> The eighty-six signatories of the statement included numerous leading pastors such as Bill Hybels and Rick Warren, the presidents of Wheaton College and Calvin College, leaders of parachurch organizations such as World Vision, and individuals affiliated with the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), Christianity Today and the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN).

The evangelical opponents of prioritizing action to regulate climate change responded with their own statement. The ISA released an open letter to the signers of the ECI statement and advocated a strikingly different approach. The open letter questioned “the extent, the significance, and perhaps the existence of the much-touted scientific consensus on catastrophic human-induced global warming.”<sup>56</sup> The letter further asserted that “the harm caused by mandated reductions in energy consumption in the quixotic quest to reduce global warming will far exceed its benefits.”<sup>57</sup> It concluded that human efforts to stop climate change “are largely futile,” that scarce

---

50. E. Calvin Beisner, *Biblical Principles for Environmental Stewardship*, in ISA EXAMINATION, *supra* note 47, at 19 [hereinafter *Biblical Principles*]; E. CALVIN BEISNER, *WHERE GARDEN MEETS WILDERNESS: EVANGELICAL ENTRY INTO THE ENVIRONMENTAL DEBATE* (1997) (exploring in much greater detail the biblical teaching related to environmental issues).

51. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3. The creation of the ECI was preceded by a November 2000 meeting of evangelical scientists, a 2002 conference in Oxford organized by the John Ray Initiative and the Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies, the “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign of 2002, the 2004 Sandy Cove Covenant regarding environmental stewardship, and a statement on civic responsibility issued by the National Association of Evangelicals discussing the need for environmental stewardship. See *The Evangelical Climate Initiative: A History*, <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/history> (last visited Dec. 22, 2007); NAT’L ASS’N OF EVANGELICALS, *FOR THE HEALTH OF THE NATION: AN EVANGELICAL CALL TO CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY* 11–12, [http://www.nae.net/images/civic\\_responsibility2.pdf](http://www.nae.net/images/civic_responsibility2.pdf) (last visited Jan. 27, 2008).

52. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3, at 4.

53. *Id.* at 5.

54. *Id.* at 7.

55. *Id.* at 8.

56. The Cornwall Alliance, *An Open Letter to the Signers of “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action” and Others Concerned About Global Warming*, at 2, [http://www.cornwallalliance.org/docs/Open\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.cornwallalliance.org/docs/Open_Letter.pdf) (last visited Dec. 22, 2007).

57. *Id.*

resources could be better allocated to “more beneficial uses,” and that adaptation is a better strategy to climate change than prevention.<sup>58</sup> The open letter was endorsed by another lengthy list of evangelical leaders, including former Secretary of the Interior Donald Hodel, Family Research Council President Tony Perkins, Michael Cromartie of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Professor D.A. Carson of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and numerous pastors, professors and parachurch officials.

The debate continued in 2007. The first controversy centered on Richard Cizik, the policy director for the NAE. Cizik had become outspoken about the perils of climate change, appearing in a host of religious and secular venues to speak about the topic. His efforts earned him the scorn of the evangelical opponents of climate change regulations, who appealed to the NAE board to remove him from his position because “he regularly speaks without authorization for the entire organization and puts forward his own political opinions as scientific fact.”<sup>59</sup> The NAE board declined to remove Cizik,<sup>60</sup> but he remains a controversial figure in the debate.

The next significant event occurred in June 2007, when the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee held a hearing on religious perspectives on climate change. Four evangelicals were among the witnesses before the committee: Jim Ball, the head of the EEN, who explained the conclusions of the ECI and its public policy recommendations; activist and historian David Barton, who identified the distinctive evangelical approaches to theology, science and prioritizing social issues; James Tonkovich of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, who emphasized the positive value of human population and development; and Southern Baptist Seminary Dean Russell Moore, who explained why Southern Baptists were concerned about the popular demand to respond to climate change.<sup>61</sup>

It is unclear how these discussions have affected the broader community of evangelicals who are unfamiliar with climate change. A September

---

58. *Id.* at 3. The ISA also discouraged the NAE from taking an official position on climate change issues. Interfaith Stewardship Alliance, A Letter to the National Association of Evangelicals on the Issue of Global Warming, <http://www.interfaithstewardship.org/pdf/NAE-appeal%20letter.pdf> (last visited Feb. 7, 2008). The ISA contended that “there should be room for Bible-believing evangelicals to disagree about the cause, severity and solutions to the global warming issue.” *Id.* The signers of that letter included Prison Fellowship Ministries founder Charles Colson, Focus on the Family head James Dobson, and several more evangelical pastors and leaders. *Id.*

59. Letter from Don Wildmon et al., Chairman, American Family Association, to L. Roy Taylor, Chairman of the Board, National Association of Evangelicals (Mar. 1, 2007), available at <http://www.citizenlink.org/pdfs/NAELetterFinal.pdf>.

60. See Laurie Goodstein, *Evangelical Group Rebuffs Critics on the Right*, N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 14, 2007, at A15.

61. See *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14. The three other religious leaders who testified at the hearing were Katharine Jefferts Schori, the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church (and a former scientist); John Carr of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; and Rabbi David Saperstein of the Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism.

2007 poll conducted by The Barna Group indicated that evangelicals were far less concerned about climate change than any other group in American society. Only thirty-three percent of evangelicals considered climate change a "major" problem, compared to fifty-nine percent of Catholics and main-line Protestants and sixty-nine percent of atheists and agnostics. Indeed, evangelicals were "the least concerned segment among more than fifty population groups studied."<sup>62</sup> By contrast, a poll released by Ellison Research one month later found that eighty-four percent of evangelicals supported legislation to reduce global warming.<sup>63</sup> Whatever the precise numbers, as of September 2007, the Wall Street Journal reported that the "split over global warming widens among evangelicals."<sup>64</sup>

In sum, evangelicals acknowledge that the earth is warming, but they are divided about what that means and what to do about it. The ECI and its supporters want to act now and to act aggressively; the ISA and its supporters counsel caution and prudence before prioritizing climate change ahead of other issues. The debate among evangelicals thus mirrors, albeit dimly, the broader debate about climate change. The congressional committee hearing featuring Al Gore's testimony warning of a planetary emergency also included Bjorn Lomborg's reply that "[s]tatements about the strong, ominous and immediate consequences of global warming are often wildly exaggerated."<sup>65</sup> Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger view climate change as a serious problem, but they reject the pollution control responses advocated by most environmentalists and favor encouraging—rather than discouraging—economic development in order to arrest climate change.<sup>66</sup> Such conflicting opinions have blocked the most ambitious proposals for new legal tools to respond to climate change. Congressional efforts to enact sweeping legislation aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions remain stalemated despite the Democratic takeover of Congress after the November 2006 elections. States, local governments and private industry have attacked

---

62. The Barna Group, *Born Again Christians Remain Skeptical, Divided About Global Warming*, THE BARN UPDATE (Sept. 17, 2007), available at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=279>.

63. *Evangelical Leaders Increase Pressure on Capitol Hill to Enact Prudent Federal Climate Policy: New National Poll Reveals Broad Evangelical Support for Climate Legislation*, P.R. NEWswire, Oct. 11, 2007 (citing the results of the poll); see *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14 (testimony of Jim Ball, citing a September 2005 Ellison Research poll concluding that seventy percent of evangelicals thought that climate change would be a serious threat to future generations).

64. Andrew Higgins, *Split over Global Warming Widens Among Evangelicals*, WALL ST. J., Sept. 28, 2007, at A1.

65. *Perspectives on Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 8, at 1 (testimony of Bjorn Lomborg), available at [http://democrats.science.house.gov/Media/File/CommDocs/hearings/2007/energy/21mar/lomborg\\_testimony.pdf](http://democrats.science.house.gov/Media/File/CommDocs/hearings/2007/energy/21mar/lomborg_testimony.pdf). Al Gore also testified during this joint hearing in March of 2007.

66. See TED NORDHAUS & MICHAEL SHELLENBERGER, *BREAK THROUGH: FROM THE DEATH OF ENVIRONMENTALISM TO THE POLITICS OF POSSIBILITY* (2007).

the issue more aggressively.<sup>67</sup> Litigation relying upon existing laws has achieved mixed results.<sup>68</sup> The climate change issue, in short, has gained significant public attention but yielded modest legal gains, which is why so many parties on all sides of the issue are looking to persuade evangelicals to support their cause.

## II. WHY EVANGELICALS DISAGREE

"Everybody is for stopping global warming," as climate change skeptic Charles Colson has acknowledged,<sup>69</sup> yet the evangelical community remains divided concerning climate change. The division has become national news. What is lacking is an explanation. I will consider three possible answers in this section: understandings of theology and ethics, the role of science, and views of law and politics. I conclude that little of the division among evangelicals with respect to climate change is attributable to theology or ethics, that contrasting understandings of the science of climate change explains some of the division, and that the most profound differences among evangelicals exist in their perspectives regarding the nature of law and the political process.

### A. *Theology & Ethics*

Theological differences would seem to be an unlikely source of disagreement among evangelical attitudes toward climate change. The popular perception of evangelicals is that they adhere to a similar theology, almost by definition. Actually, there are numerous lively theological disputes within the evangelical community, which attests to the difficulty in identifying precisely what qualifies as "evangelical." Few of these points of theological difference color evangelical views of climate change. Indeed, many of the same biblical principles are cited by both proponents and opponents of a greater governmental response to climate change. "All sides cite the

---

67. See *Green Mountain Chrysler Plymouth Dodge Jeep v. Crombie*, 508 F. Supp. 2d 295 (D. Vt. 2007) (holding that the Clean Air Act did not preempt Vermont's greenhouse gas emissions standards for new cars); GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE AND U.S. LAW (Michael B. Gerrard ed., 2007); Sarah Krakoff, *Arnold Schwarzenegger and Our Common Future*, 53 BUFF. L. REV. 925 (2005).

68. See, e.g., *Mass. v. EPA*, 127 S. Ct. 1438 (2007) (upholding EPA's authority to regulate carbon dioxide emissions under the Clean Air Act); *Cal. v. General Motors Corp.*, No. C06-05755, 2007 WL 2726871, at \*18 (N.D. Cal. Sept. 17, 2007) (rejecting the state's public nuisance claim against the automobile industry); see also *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 12-Month Petition Finding and Proposed Rule to List the Polar Bear (Ursus maritimus) as Threatened Throughout Its Range; Proposed Rule*, 72 Fed. Reg. 1064 (Jan. 9, 2007) (to be codified at 50 C.F.R. pt. 17) (proposing to list the polar bear under the Endangered Species Act because of climate change); J.B. Ruhl, *Climate Change and the Endangered Species Act: Building Bridges to the No-Analog Future*, 88 B.U. L. REV. 1 (2008).

69. Charles Colson, *Evangelical Activism*, BREAKPOINT COMMENTARIES, Feb. 15, 2006, available at <http://www.breakpoint.org/listingarticle.asp?ID=720>.

Bible," to echo Abraham Lincoln.<sup>70</sup> There are, however, some subtle differences in theology among the evangelicals who have addressed climate change issues, and those differences become more pronounced when they are translated into ethical principles.

The idea animating much recent evangelical writing about environmental protection is that the Bible commands that we care for God's creation. The Bible teaches that God created the world, that He pronounced the creation to be good, that He is the owner of all of creation, that He gave humanity "dominion" over creation, and that He charged humanity with the responsibility of caring for creation.<sup>71</sup> Applying these principles to climate change, the ECI proclaimed that "Christians must care about climate change because we love God the Creator and Jesus our Lord, through whom and for whom the creation was made. This is God's world, and any damage that we do to God's world is an offense against God Himself."<sup>72</sup> The ECI supports that assertion by referencing three biblical texts: the creation story of Genesis 1, David's proclamation that "the earth is the Lord's" in Psalm 24, and Paul's reminder in Colossians 1:15 that all things were created by and for Christ.<sup>73</sup>

The dominion command is what troubled Lynn White in his essay blaming Christianity for the environmental crisis, and its precise meaning is still questioned among evangelicals. But most evangelicals read the first chapters of Genesis to emphasize the need for stewardship, rather than justifying domineering human exploitation of the environment.<sup>74</sup> Indeed, the ECI cited the dominion passage in arguing that "[c]limate change is the latest evidence of our failure to exercise proper stewardship."<sup>75</sup> The Cornwall Declaration agreed that God commanded humans "to exercise stewardship over the earth."<sup>76</sup>

Evangelicals agree that creation has suffered from human sin. As the Cornwall Declaration put it, sin "defiled the good creation."<sup>77</sup> Biblical support for the effects of human sinfulness is seen most clearly in Paul's letter

70. Higgins, *supra* note 64, at A1; Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States of America, Second Inaugural Address (Mar. 4, 1865), available at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/foth/secinaug.htm> ("Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God . . .").

71. See, e.g., John Copeland Nagle, *Christianity and Environmental Law*, in CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON LEGAL THOUGHT 435, 438–40 (Michael McConnell et al. eds., 2001) (citing biblical texts).

72. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3, at 7.

73. *Id.*

74. See Nagle, *supra* note 39, at 987–93 (describing recent theories of dominion and stewardship). Norman Wirzba favors a "servanthood" model instead of stewardship, citizenship or other understandings of biblical teaching. See WIRZBA, *supra* note 38, at 128–45.

75. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3, at 7.

76. CORNWALL DECLARATION, *supra* note 42, at 2.

77. *Id.*



to the Romans, which speaks of how "the creation was subjected to frustration" and of creation's "bondage to decay."<sup>78</sup>

Evangelicals further agree about the duty to care for our neighbors, especially the poor. Jesus taught his followers to "[l]ove your neighbor as yourself."<sup>79</sup> He also evidenced special concern for the plight of the poor.<sup>80</sup> The ECI thus cited its "deep commitment to Jesus Christ and his commands to love our neighbors" and to "care for 'the least of these'" as motivating its call to action.<sup>81</sup> The ECI sought "a safe and healthy future for our children,"<sup>82</sup> thus invoking the theme of intergenerational responsibility that is common in international environmental law. The ECI also included "God's other creatures" among those who could be affected by climate change.<sup>83</sup> The ISA and other skeptics of climate change regulation concur with the theological call to help our neighbors, but as I will discuss below, they offer a strikingly different view of how various policies could affect the poor.

The duty to care for our neighbors fits within the broader evangelical view of humanity. The Cornwall Declaration proclaimed that God gave humans "a privileged place among creatures."<sup>84</sup> This makes some evangelicals leery of environmental concerns that are unrelated to the health and welfare of humanity. James Dobson, for example, objected that "[a]ny issue that seems to put plants and animals above humans is one that we cannot support."<sup>85</sup> There is particular concern about suggestions involving the relationship between human overpopulation and environmental conditions. Beisner is one of many evangelicals to insist that people are a blessing, not a curse.<sup>86</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that so many evangelicals were upset with Richard Cizik's remark to the World Bank that "[w]e need to confront population control and we can."<sup>87</sup> Of course, such views are controversial in many quarters outside evangelical circles, but evangelicals generally agree about the biblical account of humanity's place in creation.

The few places where evangelicals evidence some disagreement relate to their view of the earth's present and its future. Evangelicals acknowledge

---

78. *Romans* 8:20–21.

79. *Mark* 12:31.

80. See, e.g., *Matthew* 25; *Luke* 4:18.

81. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3.

82. *Id.*

83. *Id.* at 5.

84. CORNWALL DECLARATION, *supra* note 42, at 3; see *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 1 (testimony of David Barton) ("In general, conservative people of faith view the creation in Genesis as moving upward in an ascending spiritual hierarchy, beginning with the creation of the lowest (the inanimate) and moving toward highest (the animate), with the creation of man and woman being the capstone of God's work.").

85. Press Release, Focus on the Family, Focus on the Family Concerned by Global Warming Theory (Mar. 10, 2005) (on file with author); accord *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 1 (testimony of David Barton) (describing how evangelicals view humans above the rest of creation in God's hierarchy).

86. See Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 50, at 14.

87. Letter from Don Wildmon et al., *supra* note 59, at 2.

that the earth as created by God is good, but that affirmation yields conflicting inferences. For those concerned about climate change, the goodness of the earth demands that people act to preserve that goodness. For skeptics, the earth's goodness demonstrates that it is capable of withstanding greenhouse gases. Thus, Beisner has written that "[i]rreversible, catastrophic damage is rare to nonexistent in the world's history" because "the wise Creator has built multiple self-protecting and self-correcting layers into His world."<sup>88</sup> Moreover, God declared the earth "good" before the fall, and evangelicals question the effects of that fall on the earth as we experience it today.

Eschatology—the ultimate future of the world—plays an intriguing role in debates about how Christian theology relates to current environmental concerns. The Book of Revelation portrays numerous events whose meaning have long been debated and continue to be debated within the evangelical community.<sup>89</sup> Most of the controversy surrounding Revelation has involved the precise timing of those events, but questions of when are less important than questions of what in the environmental context. Revelation culminates in "a new heaven and a new earth" after "the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."<sup>90</sup> What is this "new earth," and what does the passing away of the "first earth" mean? James Tonkowich has described the Bible as "a story of re-creation," not of "restoration," thereby contradicting Richard Cizik's suggestion that God is calling us to "restore Eden."<sup>91</sup> There is also a belief that a sovereign God will not allow humans to completely destroy His creation. God's covenant to Noah to never destroy the earth again, writes Beisner, "ought to make Christians inherently skeptical of claims that this or that human action threatens permanent and catastrophic damage to the Earth."<sup>92</sup>

Notably absent from the list of evangelical beliefs is the popular perception that Christians do not care about this earth because God will replace it when Christ returns. This eschatological argument against Christian interest in environmental protection is rooted in the belief that the Bible's—and specifically, the Book of Revelation's—promise of the future destruction of the current world and the unveiling of a new earth renders care for this world unnecessary. That is the premise of a few interviews of individual evangelicals who were asked about their interest in environmental issues. Notably, though, that argument has not been voiced by any of the evangelicals who have been active in addressing the climate change debate. Instead,

88. Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 50, at 13.

89. See generally MICHAEL WILCOCK, *I SAW HEAVEN OPENED: THE MESSAGE OF REVELATION* (1975) (summarizing the Book of Revelation and its interpretive controversies).

90. *Revelation* 21:1.

91. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 2 (testimony of James Tonkowich); see Richard Cizik, *12 Ideas for the Planet*, *NEWSWEEK*, Apr. 16, 2007, at 87.

92. Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 86, at 16.

the view of evangelicals as hostage to a particular reading of Revelation appears in a number of critiques of the Bush Administration's environmental policy.<sup>93</sup> "Many Christian fundamentalists feel that concern for the future of our planet is irrelevant," wrote Glenn Scherer in an oft-quoted article in *Grist Magazine*, "because it has no future."<sup>94</sup> Scherer quoted Secretary of the Interior James Watt's testimony before Congress in 1981 that "[a]fter the last tree is felled, Christ will come back."<sup>95</sup> In fact, Watt actually told Congress in that "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns, whatever it is we have to manage with a skill to have the resources needed for future generations."<sup>96</sup>

Actually, evangelicals object to what they describe as the secular view of the apocalypse presumed by those who are most concerned about climate change. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* described the future effects of climate change as "almost like a nature hike through the book of Revelation."<sup>97</sup> Nordhaus and Shellenberger described *An Inconvenient Truth* as exemplifying the tendency of environmentalists to "preach terrifying stories of eco-apocalypse."<sup>98</sup> Likewise, Steven Hayward observed "the centrality of the apocalypse to both creeds," both Christian and environmentalist. According to Hayward:

The crucial difference is that the Christian apocalypse . . . includes the promise of salvation and redemption for man and nature, while the secular ecoapocalypse is barren and hopeless. One irony of this comparison is the way in which it reveals a greater anthropocentric conceit on the part of fundamentalist environmentalism than fundamentalist Christianity. . . . For all of the nature-worship that comes along with fundamentalist environmentalism, it is surprising that it has not developed a secu-

---

93. See, e.g., STEPHEN BATES, *GOD'S OWN COUNTRY: TALES FROM THE BIBLE BELT* 314–17 (2007) (arguing the evangelical expectation of an apocalypse helps to explain the unwillingness to address climate change); JARED DIAMOND, *COLLAPSE: HOW SOCIETIES CHOOSE TO FAIL OR SUCCEED* 462 (2005) (suggesting that a mining executive who belongs to "a church that teaches that God will soon arrive on Earth" need not worry about land reclamation projects); STEPHENIE HENDRICKS, *DIVINE DESTRUCTION: WISE USE, DOMINION THEOLOGY, AND THE MAKING OF AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY* 46–52 (2005).

94. Glenn Scherer, *The Godly Must Be Crazy: Christian-Right Views Are Swaying Politicians and Threatening the Environment*, *GRIST MAG.*, Oct. 27, 2004, available at <http://www.grist.org/news/maindish/2004/10/27/scherer-christian/index.html> (emphasis omitted).

95. *Id.* This partial account of Secretary Watt's testimony has been repeated in numerous sources, including the otherwise excellent WIRZBA, *supra* note 38, at 83; and BOUMA-PREDIGER, *supra* note 38, at 71–72.

96. *Briefing by the Secretary of the Interior: Oversight Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 97th Cong. 37 (1981) (statement of James G. Watt, Secretary of the Interior). *The Weekly Standard* published an article responding to Scherer's inaccurate quotation of Secretary Watt. See John Hinderaker, "Rapture": *Republicans, the Environment, and the Second Coming: The Origins of a Liberal Myth*, *THE WKLY. STANDARD*, Feb. 14, 2005. *Grist Magazine* had apologized for Scherer's error. See Scherer, *supra* note 94.

97. GORE, *supra* note 20, at 109.

98. NORDHAUS & SHELLINGER, *supra* note 66, at 130–31.

lar doctrine of resurrection based on evolution to go along with its doctrine of the eco-apocalypse.<sup>99</sup>

Evangelicals possess what Lindsay describes as an “elastic orthodoxy,” which holds core convictions while accepting those with different understandings of Christian teaching.<sup>100</sup> This elastic orthodoxy, however, “is not a softening of conviction or a blurring of the lines that make Christianity distinctive.”<sup>101</sup> Thus, evangelicals are able to accept diverse understandings of eschatology while rejecting the ideas of “eco-apocalypse” described above. The evangelical acceptance of an elastic orthodoxy suggests that the search for the disagreement about how to apply Christian teaching to public policy with respect to climate change must look elsewhere.

### B. Science

The impetus for any response to climate change rests upon the scientific evidence that the climate is changing. Or, as the ECI put it, “[b]ecause all religious/moral claims about climate change are relevant only if climate change is real and is mainly human-induced, everything hinges on the scientific data.”<sup>102</sup> That is a problem. Richard Cizik told an interviewer that “in the relationship between religion and science, climate change . . . is the third rail, ‘you touch it, you die.’”<sup>103</sup> Evangelical attitudes toward climate change are shaped by the unique relationship of evangelicals to contemporary scientific argumentation. Many evangelicals are often more skeptical than many other individuals about the nature of scientific claims, but again, it is difficult to explain why some evangelicals accept the popular scientific consensus regarding climate change while others do not.

Historically, evangelical Protestants were at the forefront of the scientific revolution.<sup>104</sup> That changed over the course of several centuries, particularly when Darwin’s theory of evolution was seen to contradict the teachings of the first chapter of Genesis.<sup>105</sup> Evangelicals are especially

99. Hayward, *supra* note 10, at 3 (emphasis omitted); see *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14 (testimony of Russell D. Moore) (arguing that “we cannot share a radical environmentalist’s apocalyptic scenarios of ‘earth in the balance’”).

100. LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 216.

101. *Id.* at 217.

102. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3; see *Comments*, in CREATION AT RISK?: RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND ENVIRONMENTALISM 71 (Michael Cromartie ed., 1995) (containing a statement of Ron Sider, finding it “distressing that we have not been able to get beyond enormous disagreements on the scientific data so we can deal with the ethical questions”).

103. *Speaking of Faith: The Evolution of American Evangelism* (American Public Media broadcast Apr. 12, 2007).

104. See generally EVANGELICALS AND SCIENCE IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (David N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart & Mark A. Noll eds., 1999).

105. For excellent overviews of this vast controversy, see EDWARD L. LARSON, EVOLUTION: THE REMARKABLE HISTORY OF A SCIENTIFIC THEORY (2004) and RONALD J. NUMBERS, THE CREATIONISTS: FROM SCIENTIFIC CREATIONISM TO INTELLIGENT DESIGN (expanded ed. 2006).

wary of scientific claims they regard as contrary to biblical teaching. This is particularly obvious in the ongoing dispute between theories of evolution and creation. Richard Cizik said that “historically, evangelicals have reasoned like this: Scientists believe in evolution. Scientists are telling us climate change is real. Therefore, I won’t believe what scientists are saying.”<sup>106</sup> In fact, there is a notable diversity of opinion among evangelicals with respect to the precise relationship between biblical teaching about creation and scientific teaching about evolution, but it is certainly true that evangelicals are more cautious in approaching evolutionary science than other segments of the public. That caution affects attitudes toward the scientific basis for climate change. “If you don’t believe in the evolutionary sciences,” claimed Chip Ward, “chances are you also don’t heed or trust the ecological sciences that underlie environmental law and policy.”<sup>107</sup>

Such distrust appears in contexts apart from the evolution controversy. Some in the evangelical community see scientists and environmentalists as worshipping the earth and hostile to Christianity.<sup>108</sup> Recent studies indicating that scientists are far more likely to be politically liberal and secular than the general population fuel such concerns.<sup>109</sup> Of course, there are many scientists who seek to integrate their religious beliefs and their scientific expertise.<sup>110</sup> There are also observers who question the use of science in environmental policy without claiming any religious commitment.<sup>111</sup> But the conflicts between the languages, claims and authorities used by evangelical beliefs and scientific beliefs are especially profound.

Evangelicals share wider concerns about the credibility of scientific expertise funded by particular sources. That accusation has cut both ways in the climate change debate. The scientists who are skeptical of climate

---

106. *CNN Presents: God’s Christian Warriors* (CNN broadcast Aug. 23, 2007). Cizik added that such reasoning was “illogical.” *Id.* Calvin Beisner responded that Cizik’s statement “riles a lot of us” and challenged Cizik to “offer a single documented instance of a single notable evangelical critic of his views on global warming who has argued in any way remotely like that.” E. Calvin Beisner, *Global Warming: Why Evangelicals Should Not Be Alarmed*, *REFORMED PERSP.*, Sept. 2007, at 24.

107. Posting of Chip Ward, *Left Behind: Bush’s Holy War on Nature*, to TomDispatch.com, [http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/22312/tomdispatch\\_chip\\_ward\\_bush\\_s\\_holy\\_war\\_on\\_nature](http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/22312/tomdispatch_chip_ward_bush_s_holy_war_on_nature) (Sept. 15, 2005).

108. *See, e.g.*, Posting of Richard Cizik, *E-Correspondence: Can Religion and Environmentalism Find Common Ground in the 21st Century?*, to Audubonmagazine.org, <http://audubonmagazine.org/eCorrespondence/ecorrespondence090506.html> (Sept. 5, 2006) (noting the “tragic stereotype . . . that ‘science’ is a synonym for atheism”).

109. *See, e.g.*, LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 109 (citing studies indicating that “only 1.5 percent of elite scientists identify as evangelical, compared to anywhere from 25 to 47 percent of the general population”). Lindsay concludes that “elite scientists are not likely to be evangelical, and most of them present themselves and their work as being in opposition to evangelicalism and its belief system.” *Id.*

110. *See, e.g.*, FRANCIS S. COLLINS, *THE LANGUAGE OF GOD: A SCIENTIST PRESENTS EVIDENCE FOR BELIEF* (2007); KENNETH R. MILLER, *FINDING DARWIN’S GOD: A SCIENTIST’S SEARCH FOR COMMON GROUND BETWEEN GOD AND EVOLUTION* (2007).

111. *See, e.g.*, NORDHAUS & SHELLINGER, *supra* note 66, at 138–43.

change have been criticized for accepting funding from entities—especially large oil corporations—that have a vested interest in current levels of greenhouse emissions. As British evangelical scientist Sir John Houghton stated, “[T]here are strong vested interests that have spent tens of millions of dollars on spreading misinformation about the climate change issue.”<sup>112</sup> On the other side, critics have suggested that scientists may be biased by their reliance upon continued federal government funding for climate change research, for “this support would stop if the research community were to say that much of the concern about this issue was misplaced.”<sup>113</sup>

Evangelicals are also aware that scientists have been wrong in the past. Richard Land, the head of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, referred to “the loss of credibility . . . in my constituency over some of the wild projections of the doomsayers among the environmentalists.”<sup>114</sup> David Barton’s testimony to Congress cited 1960s predictions of a “population bomb,” exaggerated worries about DDT, fear about aerosols in the 1970s, and past warnings of a coming ice age.<sup>115</sup> Barton concluded that evangelicals “tend to be comfortable with theological teachings that have endured millennia but not with science that often reverses its claims on the same issue.”<sup>116</sup>

This skepticism toward scientific claims affects evangelical perspectives on climate change. First, evangelicals disagree—perhaps more than others—about the causes and consequences of global warming. No one doubts that the world’s climate is changing and global temperatures are rising. There is a dispute, however, about the extent of those changes and whether they are caused by human activity. The signers of the ECI acknowledged that “many of us have required considerable convincing before becoming persuaded that climate change is a real problem and that it ought to matter to us as Christians.”<sup>117</sup> They now fear that “[m]illions of people could die in this century because of climate change, most of them our poorest global neighbors.”<sup>118</sup> The signers of the ISA still are not convinced. In February 2007, Jerry Falwell preached a sermon entitled “The Myth of

---

112. John Houghton, Presentation to the National Association of Evangelicals, *Climate Change: A Christian Challenge and Opportunity* (Mar. 2005), available at [http://www.creationcare.org/files/houghton\\_NAE\\_briefing.pdf](http://www.creationcare.org/files/houghton_NAE_briefing.pdf).

113. Patrick J. Michaels, *The Climate-Change Debacle: The Perils of Politicizing Science*, in *CREATION AT RISK?*, *supra* note 102, at 51.

114. *Comments*, in *CREATION AT RISK?*, *supra* note 102, at 65 (statement of Richard Land); accord *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 2 (testimony of David Barton) (citing mistaken scientific claims regarding fetal tissue research, overpopulation, DDT and aerosols); *id.* at 6 (testimony of James Tonkovich) (asserting that “[s]cientific consensus has been wrong before and it will be wrong again”).

115. See *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 2 (testimony of David Barton).

116. *Id.* at 3.

117. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3.

118. *Id.* at 5.

Global Warming.”<sup>119</sup> The Southern Baptist Convention approved a resolution in June 2007, insisting that “[t]he scientific community is divided regarding the extent to which humans are responsible for recent global warming” and that “[m]any scientists reject the idea of catastrophic human-induced global warming.”<sup>120</sup> Calvin Beisner wrote in September 2007 that the scientific “consensus” regarding climate change “is fictional.”<sup>121</sup> The statement by one leading evangelical pastor that action on climate change is necessary “regardless of what the science of it is” only fueled the skeptics’ concerns.<sup>122</sup> Evangelicals now debate whether the debate about the science of climate change is over.<sup>123</sup>

Evangelicals thus disagree about the scientific evidence concerning climate change and the ways of responding to it. Indeed, the debate has become personal; several evangelicals have chastised those with different perspectives on climate change for resorting to ad hominem arguments to support their conclusions.<sup>124</sup> But why? Roy Spencer’s essay for the ISA rightly observed that “[s]cience does not have anything to say about the policy implications of global warming. Science, by itself, has no values or morals.”<sup>125</sup> True enough, but evangelicals recognize as well as anyone else that scientific arguments are the preferred currency of the policy realm. Scientific claims presage legal enactments. Most evangelicals are like the vast majority of the public who have no scientific expertise but who must make a scientific judgment in order to articulate an informed policy preference. “I am quick to say that I am not a scientist,” preached Jerry Falwell shortly after Justice Scalia had admitted the same thing.<sup>126</sup>

As evangelicals with no prior experience in environmental issues are faced with apparent competing scientific claims, “[u]nfortunately, the bot-

119. Jerry Falwell, Televangelist and Founder of Thomas Road Baptist Church, *The Myth of Global Warming* (Feb. 25, 2007), available at [http://sermons.trbc.org/20070225\\_11AM.html](http://sermons.trbc.org/20070225_11AM.html).

120. S. BAPTIST CONVENTION, RES. NO. 5, ON GLOBAL WARMING (2007), available at <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1171>; accord Spencer, *Global Warming: How Much of a Threat?*, in ISA EXAMINATION, *supra* note 47, at 2–7 (presenting the scientific case against the worst climate change scenarios); Press Release, Focus on the Family, Focus on the Family Concerned by Global Warming Theory (Mar. 10, 2005), available at <http://www.family.org> (containing James Dobson’s claim that “significant disagreement exists within the scientific community regarding the validity of this theory” of climate change).

121. Beisner, *supra* note 106, at 24.

122. Mark Bergin, *Greener Than Thou: Earth Day 2006 Arrives With Some Evangelicals Making a Controversial Push for Radical Environmental Legislation*, WORLD MAG., Apr. 22, 2006, available at <http://www.worldmag.com/articles/11745> (quoting Florida megachurch pastor Joel Hunter).

123. See *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 5 (testimony of James Tonkowich).

124. See *id.*

125. Spencer, *Global Warming: How Much of a Threat?*, in ISA EXAMINATION, *supra* note 47, at 6.

126. Falwell, *supra* note 119; See Transcript of Oral Argument at \*13, *Mass. v. EPA*, 127 S. Ct. 1438 (2007) (Justice Scalia stating during oral argument in a climate change case that he is “not a scientist”).

tom line for many will be, whom do you want to trust?"<sup>127</sup> That was Gordon College Professor Richard T. Wright's conclusion concerning the role of science in his 1995 survey of the status of environmental beliefs among evangelicals. Wright advised interested Christians "to search for media with no obvious ties to a political agenda."<sup>128</sup> That is a wise prescription, but it is far easier said than done. Wright scolds Beisner for relying upon the work of scientists who are "anti-environmentalists," but his recommendation of journals such as *Time* and *Newsweek* as reliable sources of scientific information is unlikely to persuade evangelicals who are suspicious of such national media.<sup>129</sup> The temptation is to follow the learning of Emory law professor and political scientist Michael Kang: individuals rely upon "heuristic cues" such as the views of individuals and organizations that they trust to help them decide whether scientific evidence supports a proposed legal policy.<sup>130</sup>

### C. Law & Politics

The division among evangelicals concerning climate change is probably best explained by different perspectives on the use of the law. This, too, may be surprising because most evangelicals agree about the role of religious arguments in the public square. How that is done is the subject of some debate among evangelicals, as evidenced by Southern Baptist theologian Russell Moore's congressional testimony that "the biblical text not be used as a vehicle for a political agenda."<sup>131</sup> The difficulty of identifying the precise method of integrating faith and law should not obscure the fact that evangelicals accept that religious arguments should influence public policy. Of course, this distinguishes evangelicals from some other religious believers and from many secular positions that object to the injection of religious beliefs into public policy. But that is not the source of any significant differences among evangelicals considering climate change. This section thus considers the contrasting perspectives on four interrelated issues: how to respond to scientific uncertainty in formulating public policy, political strategy, the appropriate role of the government and other institutions, and theories of jurisprudence.

127. Richard T. Wright, *Tearing Down the Green: Environmental Backlash in the Evangelical Sub-Culture*, 47 PERSP. ON SCI. & CHRISTIAN FAITH 80, 80–91 (June 1995), available at <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/PSCF/1995/PSCF6-95Wright.html>; accord Andy Crouch, *Environmental Wager*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY, Aug. 4, 2005, at 66 (insisting that "[a]ll science is ultimately a matter of trust" because "[t]he tools, methods, and mathematical skills scientists acquire over years of training are beyond the reach of the rest of us, even of scientists in different fields").

128. Wright, *supra* note 127.

129. *Id.*

130. See Michael S. Kang, *Democratizing Direct Democracy: Restoring Voter Competence Through Heuristic Cues and "Disclosure Plus,"* 50 UCLA L. REV. 1141 (2003).

131. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 2 (testimony of Russell D. Moore).



### 1. Responding to Scientific Uncertainty

Evangelicals invoke, albeit not in so many words, two familiar and sometimes competing principles of environmental law. The supporters of governmental regulation of climate change draw support from the precautionary principle. There are many understandings of that principle, but the general idea is that you should regulate possible environmental harms in the face of uncertain evidence.<sup>132</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) advised that nations “should take precautionary measures to anticipate, prevent or minimize the causes of climate change and mitigate its adverse effects. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing [regulatory] measures.”<sup>133</sup> Susan Power Bratton described the relationship between the precautionary principle and biblical teaching, especially the Book of Proverbs, suggesting that wisdom demands prudence when confronting environmental risks.<sup>134</sup> Andy Crouch applied this approach to climate change in his “Environmental Wager” column in an August 2005 issue of *Christianity Today*, the leading popular evangelical journal.<sup>135</sup> Crouch credited unnamed evangelical scientists with likening the debate over climate change to Pascal’s wager, in which Blaise Pascal claimed that the immeasurable value of belief in God overwhelms the case for disbelief.<sup>136</sup>

The evangelical opponents of climate change regulation respond by invoking a different form of the precautionary principle. They call for prudence in imposing regulation that may have substantial costs. “Which one of you,” asked the ISA, quoting Jesus’ words from the Gospel of Luke, “when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the

---

132. The principle is rarely cited within the evangelical community’s debate about climate change. Compare Christopher Flavin, *A Response*, in *CREATION AT RISK?*, *supra* note 102, at 59–60 (endorsing the principle), with Martin Durkin (Director) *THE GREAT GLOBAL WARMING SWINDLE* (WAGtv 2007) (In the movie, Paul Driessen proclaimed that “the precautionary principle is a very interesting beast. It’s basically used to promote a particular agenda and ideology. It’s always used in one direction only. It talks about the risks of using a particular technology, fossil fuels for example, but never about the risks of not using it. It never talks about the benefits of having that technology.”).

133. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change art. 3(3), May 9, 1992, 1771 U.N.T.S. 107 [hereinafter U.N. Framework Convention]; see Cass W. Sunstein, *Irreversible and Catastrophic*, 91 CORNELL L. REV. 841 (2006); W. David Montgomery & Anne E. Smith, *Global Climate Change and the Precautionary Principle*, 6 HUM. & ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESS. 399, 400 (2000).

134. See Susan Power Bratton, *The Precautionary Principle and the Book of Proverbs: Toward an Ethic of Ecological Prudence in Ocean Management*, 7 WORLDVIEWS 253, 267 (2003).

135. See Crouch, *supra* note 127.

136. See *id.*; BLAISE PASCAL, *PENSÉES* (1669), available at <http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/pascal/pensees-a.html#SECTIONIII> (“You *must* wager; it is not optional . . . . Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is . . . . If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that He is.”) (emphasis added).

cost, to see if he has enough money to complete it?"<sup>137</sup> The problem of which risks to avoid—here, those associated with climate change or attributed to government regulations—plagues the broader discussion of the precautionary principle. The UNFCCC sought to finesse the problem in its provision invoking the precautionary principle by adding that "policies and measures to deal with climate change should be cost-effective so as to ensure global benefits at the lowest possible cost."<sup>138</sup>

The opponents of aggressive governmental action against climate change voice arguments that sound like cost/benefit analyses. The premise of cost/benefit analyses is that the costs of a given proposed action should be compared to the benefits in order to determine whether the action should be taken.<sup>139</sup> Using this approach, evangelical opponents of governmental regulation insist that the costs of controlling global warming will be huge and visited upon the poor and developing nations. Recall that the ISA warned that reducing energy consumption would be far more costly than any harm resulting from climate change.<sup>140</sup> Global economic production, they say, will drop by one trillion dollars per year because of reduced energy use;<sup>141</sup> "a fraction of that one trillion dollars per year amount would be enough to provide clean drinking water and sanitation to all the remaining areas of the world presently without them."<sup>142</sup> On the benefit side of climate change, there is increased plant growth for cultivation, the fertilizing effect of carbon dioxide, reduced desertification, expanded habitat for some species, higher real estate values in Buffalo, and South Bend's increased proximity to Lake Michigan.<sup>143</sup> Evangelical proponents of regulating climate change calculate the costs and benefits differently, but they have not embraced any of the abundant scholarly critiques of cost/benefit analysis as a policymaking tool.

## 2. Political Strategy

A related argument insists that there are more important things for Christians to be worried about. Michael Lindsay's book identified abortion and sexuality, foreign policy issues such as human trafficking and religious

137. Beisner, *Biblical Principles* supra note 50, at 19 (quoting *Luke* 14:28).

138. U.N. Framework Convention, supra note 133, at art. 3(3).

139. See generally ANTHONY BOARDMAN, *COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS: CONCEPTS AND PRACTICE* (3d ed. 2005); Matthew D. Adler & Eric A. Posner, *Rethinking Cost/Benefit Analysis*, 109 *YALE L. J.* 165 (1999); FRANK ACKERMAN & LISA HEINZERLING, *PRICELESS: ON KNOWING THE PRICE OF EVERYTHING AND VALUE OF NOTHING* (2005) (the best critique of cost/benefit analysis).

140. The Cornwall Alliance, supra note 56, at 2.

141. Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, supra note 50, at 16.

142. *Id.*; see Fred L. Smith, Jr., *The Progressive Environmental Gospels Versus Classical Liberalism*, 56 *CASE W. RES. L. REV.* 621, 636 (2006) (arguing that "eco-evangelicals would 'help' the poor by closing the doorway out of poverty").

143. Okay, no one has spoken on behalf of the latter benefit, but Gregg Easterbrook noted his hometown of Buffalo's potentially improved position. Gregg Easterbrook, *Global Warming: Who Loses—And Who Wins?*, *THE ATLANTIC*, Apr. 2007, at 56.

freedom, and government funding of faith-based charitable organizations as the primary concerns of evangelical political engagement.<sup>144</sup> An August 2007 poll conducted by the Barna Group indicated that evangelicals were most concerned about “enhancing the health of Christian churches, upgrading the state of marriage and families, and improving the spiritual condition of the [United States],” and least concerned about the need for environmental protection.<sup>145</sup> David Barton’s congressional testimony cited other polls indicating that evangelicals are nearly uniform in their views regarding social issues, fighting AIDS and reducing poverty, while also finding “that Evangelicals are not yet cohesive about the issue of man-caused Global Warming.”<sup>146</sup>

The more ominous charge fears that the effort to enlist evangelicals to oppose climate change is actually a calculated attempt to divert them from their primary mission. Jerry Falwell, forsaking any subtlety, preached that “[t]he alarmism over global warming . . . is Satan’s attempt to re-direct the church’s primary focus.”<sup>147</sup> The Southern Baptist Convention resolved in 2006 that “[e]nvironmentalism is threatening to become a wedge issue to divide the evangelical community and further distract its members from the priority of the Great Commission.”<sup>148</sup> The ECI countered that “we are not a single-issue movement.”<sup>149</sup> It challenged the premise that evangelical influence will be diluted by addressing additional issues. There is even an argument that the greatest priority for most evangelicals—spreading the Gospel—will be better served if Christians are perceived as being concerned about our environment among a broader range of political issues.

A political argument also exists against associating with groups who typically take opposing positions on other issues of concern to evangelicals:

Convincing pro-life evangelicals to join forces with secular and left-leaning environmentalist groups will require overcoming a deep-rooted prejudice that associates environmentalism with paganism, pantheism and the Counterculture and New Left revolts of the 1960s—all Godzilla-sized bogeymen in the evangelical worldview. (It’s worth noting here that the distrust is mutual.)<sup>150</sup>

---

144. See LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 39–51.

145. *Americans Are Most Worried*, *supra* note 29.

146. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 3 (testimony of David Barton).

147. Falwell, *supra* note 119.

148. S. BAPTIST CONVENTION, RES. NO. 8, ON ENVIRONMENTALISM AND EVANGELICALS (June 2006), available at <http://www.sbcannualmeeting.net/sbc06/resolutions/sbcresolution-06.asp?ID=8>. The “Great Commission” is found in the parting words of Jesus to his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” *Matthew* 28:17–20.

149. ECI CALL TO ACTION, *supra* note 3, at 3.

150. Alexander Zaitchik, *Jesus Wore Birkes*, N.Y. PRESS, Dec. 17, 2004, available at <http://nypress.com/17/50/news&columns/feature.cfm>.

Richard Cizik explained that “[e]nvironmentalists have a bad reputation among evangelical Christians” because “they rely on big-government solutions,” are allied with population-control movements, “keep kooky religious company,” and “tend to prophesies of doom that don’t happen.”<sup>151</sup> Indeed, Richard Wright’s 1995 study of environmental beliefs among evangelicals concluded that “Christian anti-environmentalism can be traced directly to political commitments.” The biblical support for that view was offered by a 2006 Southern Baptist Convention resolution that sought to “resist alliances with extreme environmental groups whose positions contradict biblical principles,” citing the warning in 2 Chronicles 19:2 not to “help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord.”<sup>152</sup> In response, Richard Cizik noted the collaboration of evangelicals with Tibetan Buddhists for international religious freedom, feminists against human trafficking, the American Civil Liberties Union against prison rape, and gays and lesbians for AIDS relief.<sup>153</sup>

More generally, numerous scholars have explored the role of Christians living in a pluralistic democratic society. For example, the cosmopolitan evangelicals described by Michael Lindsay are more likely than their populist evangelical counterparts to work with those holding different beliefs.<sup>154</sup> Some cosmopolitan evangelicals identify with conservative economists, while other cosmopolitan evangelicals are more comfortable with traditional environmentalists. Lindsay, moreover, saw environmental issues as an area of “significant disagreement” that could help threaten the political cohesion evangelicals have enjoyed.<sup>155</sup> The willingness or unwillingness of evangelicals to unite with other constituencies may be key to identifying the division among evangelicals with respect to climate change.

### 3. *The Role of Government and Other Institutions*

Is climate change a problem for the government or for individual actions? Calvin Beisner offered an excellent summary of the dilemma facing evangelicals who seek to be faithful stewards of God’s creation:

Emphasizing only that the Earth is the Lord’s—while neglecting or denying that He has given it to men—tends to lead toward making decisions at broad, societal levels . . . . However, emphasizing only that God has given the Earth to men, while neglecting or denying that it still ultimately belongs to God, tends to lead toward asserting human autonomy in the use of the Earth and

151. Deborah Solomon, *Earthly Evangelist: Questions for Richard Cizik*, N.Y. TIMES MAG., Apr. 3, 2005, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/03/magazine/03QUESTIONS.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/03/magazine/03QUESTIONS.html?_r=1&oref=slogin). Cizik elaborated that the “kooky religious company” referred to “pantheists who believe that creation itself is holy, not the Creator.” *Id.*

152. S. BAPTIST CONVENTION, *supra* note 148; 2 Chronicles 19:2.

153. *Speaking of Faith*, *supra* note 103.

154. See LINDSAY, *supra* note 26, at 221.

155. *Id.* at 71.

exalting individual prerogative over the needs of the community.<sup>156</sup>

All evangelicals seem to recognize the dangers of exclusive reliance upon either collective action or individual action to respond to climate change. Indeed, the prescriptions advocated by both sides are more similar than their rhetoric would suggest. The ECI sees a role for voluntary action as well as governmental regulation; the ISA recognizes that some governmental regulation may be necessary in addition to its preferred market and voluntary solutions. Even the ECI agreed that “[w]e should use the least amount of government power necessary to achieve the objective.”<sup>157</sup> In so doing, evangelicals resurrect the sphere sovereignty teaching of Abraham Kuyper, and they echo the Catholic teaching about subsidiarity.

Evangelicals support a variety of voluntary actions to address climate change. They sponsor programs for churches to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. For example, Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, was named the “best green church” in the United States thanks to its reduction of air conditioning, substitution of lights, and turning off of computers—even though the church’s pastor is not convinced that climate change is a priority problem.<sup>158</sup> Jim Ball testified that churches should educate their members, pray for our country and its leaders, and model good behavior.<sup>159</sup> EEN established a “Cooling Creation” program through which individuals pledge to reduce their home and transportation energy use and then pay ninety-nine dollars to offset the presumed cost of the remaining emissions.<sup>160</sup> Earlier, EEN promoted its national “What Would Jesus Drive?” campaign to encourage driving choices that would reduce air pollution generally. Some evangelical writers have targeted consumerism and materialism as the true culprits in global warming and other environmental problems, citing numerous biblical texts in calling for radical changes in lifestyle. As my colleague Amy Barrett has suggested, perhaps the next campaign will simply ask, “Would Jesus Drive?” Yet, no one believes that

---

156. Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 50, at 14.

157. THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL POLICY ON CLIMATE CHANGE 1, available at <http://pub.christiansandclimate.org/pub/PrinciplesforFederalPolicyonClimateChange.pdf> (last visited Apr. 19, 2008). The Cornwall Declaration states that “[w]e aspire to a world in which the relationships between stewardship and private property are fully appreciated, allowing people’s natural incentive to care for their own property to reduce the need for collective ownership and control of resources and enterprises, and in which collective action, when deemed necessary, takes place at the most local level possible.” CORNWALL DECLARATION, *supra* note 42, at 2.

158. See Higgins, *supra* note 64, at A1.

159. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 8 (testimony of Jim Ball).

160. See EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, COOLING CREATION, <http://www.coolingcreation.org/> (last visited Dec. 22, 2007). The \$99 reflects the estimated cost of removing “an average American’s global warming pollution from the atmosphere through energy efficiency, renewable energy, and reforestation projects.” *Id.* The money is to be donated to organizations that promote such projects. *Id.*

voluntary actions are sufficient. Richard Cizik said in 2004 that “even George Bush supporters believe you have to offer something more here than simply voluntary measures.”<sup>161</sup>

Evangelicals are especially likely to support responses to climate change laws that emphasize private market decisions. Driessen calls for an embrace of “mankind’s creative genius, the promise of technology, and our amazing ability to adapt to every climate on Earth over the ages.”<sup>162</sup> The ECI agreed that we should solve the problem utilizing market forces and by protecting private property rights.<sup>163</sup> The ECI elaborated that “[g]overnment policies should be structured to allow the free market to solve the problem to the greatest extent possible.”<sup>164</sup>

The ECI and other evangelicals moved beyond reliance upon market forces to call for government regulation of activities that contribute to climate change. Jim Ball’s congressional testimony called for “an economy-wide federal policy with mandatory targets and timetables for major sources of emissions . . . .”<sup>165</sup> He acknowledged, though, that the policy “should allow for maximum freedom for businesses and the states.”<sup>166</sup> One commentator viewed the ECI’s call to action as “a highly political statement that advocated a strong federal regulatory policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”<sup>167</sup> Such stringent government environmental regulations are anathema to some evangelicals. Beisner acknowledged that “laws for environmental protection are warranted, at least in principle” because of human sin, though he questioned “the degree some have gone.”<sup>168</sup> Chuck Colson worried that “some of the global warming solutions go too far and do little good.”<sup>169</sup>

The broader argument against governmental regulation advanced by the ISA posits that such regulation will actually hurt the poor. Paul Driessen, for example, argued that putting concepts favoring the poor “into practice can be difficult” if those concepts “are defined too narrowly or their interpretation fails to identify all the likely consequences of potential policy decisions.”<sup>170</sup> The essential contention is that the harms visited by reduced

---

161. Fialka, *supra* note 12, at A2 (quoting Cizik).

162. Driessen, *supra* note 49, at 11.

163. THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, *supra* note 157, at 2.

164. *Id.* at 1.

165. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 9 (testimony of Jim Ball).

166. *Id.*

167. Smith, *supra* note 142, at 634.

168. Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 50, at 14.

169. Colson, *supra* note 69.

170. Driessen, *supra* note 49, at 9; see Hayward, *supra* note 10, at 4 (suggesting that “evangelical concern for climate change would do no favors for the suffering millions in developing nations if it blindly endorsed near-term carbon suppression as its policy preference for dealing with climate change, since it would retard economic growth—and also perpetuate current bad environmental practice—in those nations”).

energy availability to the poor will be much direr than the uncertain effects of climate change. The evangelical proponents of action against climate change have been slow to respond to this critique. Perhaps the best answer was offered by the EEN's Jim Ball, who told Congress that climate change "is not primarily an 'environmental' problem. It is the major relief and development problem of the twenty-first century, because it will make all of the basic relief and development problems much worse."<sup>171</sup> So viewed, climate change should be addressed because otherwise the billions that governments and private organizations spend to alleviate poverty will go for naught.

Much climate change scholarship presumes that the ultimate solution to climate change will be found in international law. Evangelicals are less sure. Ken Touryan of the American Scientific Affiliation is one of the few evangelicals who has written in support of the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>172</sup> The ECI endorsed the "objective" of the Framework Convention on Climate Change, but it did not say anything about the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>173</sup> The ISA is scornful of it. Paul Driessen's study contended that the treaty "could cost 1.3 million jobs in [United States] Black and Hispanic communities in 2012," and that "poor countries that depend on exports would lose opportunities and be forced to close factories, lay off workers, and postpone social, economic, health, and environmental improvement projects."<sup>174</sup> Andrew Lewis of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission referred to the "multiple flaws, scientific unknowns, and potential economic problems" of the Kyoto Protocol.<sup>175</sup> More generally, Christianity Today—which has embraced action to address climate change—has editorialized that "[i]nternational coordination is likely to slow and divert truly effective action."<sup>176</sup>

The evangelical attitudes toward the Kyoto Protocol are influenced by broader concerns about the nature and role of international law. Evangelicals are skeptical of international organizations in other contexts, usually because of the perceived substantive biases of those organizations (espe-

---

171. *Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at 6–7 (testimony of Jim Ball).

172. Kenell J. Touryan, *ASA in the 21st Century: Expanding Our Vision for Serving God, the Church, and Society Through Science and Technology*, 56 *PERSP. ON SCI. AND CHRISTIAN FAITH* 82, 84 (2004) (arguing that "[f]ull cooperation on an international scale will be required to avoid irreversible damage, such as the Kyoto Protocol").

173. *THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE*, *supra* note 157, at 1.

174. Driessen, *supra* note 49, at 9–10.

175. Andrew R. Lewis, *Policy Statement on Global Warming* (Aug. 1, 2005), *reprinted in Religious Leaders & Climate Change Hearing*, *supra* note 14, at app. (testimony of Russell D. Moore).

176. Editorial, *Heat Stroke*, *CHRISTIANITY TODAY*, Oct. 1, 2004, available at <http://www.harvardir.org/articles/print.php?article=1258> (quoting David F. Victor & Joshua C. House, *A New Currency: Climate Change and Carbon Credits*, *HARV. INT'L REV.* (2004), available at <http://www.harvardir.org/articles/print.php?article=1258>).

cially with respect to population control) and because of their preference to enact laws at the most local level possible. It is also possible that evangelicals see international law as derived from the Catholic view of natural law, though the increasing interest of some evangelicals in the natural law tradition could change those views. The ECI also called the United States to "lead by example," though it seems the idea is to support technological innovations rather than new international laws.<sup>177</sup> In the end, the division among evangelicals regarding climate change largely disappears with respect to the dispute about the Kyoto Protocol and the use of international law to address climate change.

#### D. *Uncertainty Regarding the Nature of Jurisprudence*

An evangelical response to climate change should be informed by an evangelical theory of jurisprudence. Alas, there is no such theory, or, rather, such a theory is only beginning to evolve. This work is particularly timely because the greatest weakness in much of the recent ecotheology writings of the last few decades is the simplistic notion that once one knows the theological and scientific answers, then one simply enacts a law. Of course, there are innumerable biblical commands that no evangelical (or anyone else) would want to enact into the statutory law. The climate change debate thus affords an opportunity to examine not only the role of Christian teaching about creation, but also the role of Christian teaching on the law.

The genesis of recent efforts to formulate an evangelical theory of jurisprudence began with the twenty-eight essays contained in the book *Christian Perspectives on Legal Thought*.<sup>178</sup> Four years later, John Witte and Frank Alexander edited two volumes containing "The Teachings of Modern Christianity on Law, Politics, and Human Nature."<sup>179</sup> Each of these books contains a wealth of valuable material on a wide variety of topics, but they do not really seek to develop a general theory of jurisprudence. Some evangelicals have also turned to the natural law writings of Catholics, notwithstanding the historical evangelical skepticism toward natural law.<sup>180</sup> The late nineteenth century and early twentieth century writings of Dutch politician and theologian Abraham Kuyper provide another fruitful source of legal thinking for evangelicals.<sup>181</sup>

Building on such work, Professors David Skeel and Bill Stuntz have begun to articulate an evangelical theory of jurisprudence in their recent

177. THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, *supra* note 157, at 2.

178. See CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES ON LEGAL THOUGHT, *supra* note 71. I contributed the chapter on environmental law. See *id.* at 435–52.

179. See THE TEACHINGS OF MODERN CHRISTIANITY ON LAW, POLITICS, AND HUMAN NATURE (John Witte, Jr. & Frank S. Alexander eds., 2006).

180. See STEPHEN J. GRABILL, REDISCOVERING THE NATURAL LAW IN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL ETHICS (2006); J. BUDZISZEWSKI, WRITTEN ON THE HEART: THE CASE FOR NATURAL LAW (1997); JOHN FINNIS, NATURAL LAW AND NATURAL RIGHTS (1980).

181. See Skeel, *supra* note 29, at 31–33 (analyzing Kuyper's thought).



writings. In an article they wrote together, Skeel and Stuntz were concerned about overreliance upon the civil law to regulate human conduct.<sup>182</sup> They distinguished between our laws and God's laws: God's laws gladden the heart, but human laws do not; God's laws are perfect, but human laws are not. Thus, "[w]hen legal codes try to play the role of moral codes, the result is that law ceases to function as law."<sup>183</sup> Skeel and Stuntz illustrated their point by reference to a number of criminal law provisions, relating especially to business activities that demonstrate the futility of employing moralistic understandings in the civil law to change human behavior. They added that "mixing God's law and man's law may have other unfortunate consequences: distorting religious believers' understanding of the divine law even as it distorts the public's approach to the laws of code books and court decisions."<sup>184</sup>

In a second article, Skeel critiqued the state of Christian legal scholarship and offered some initial thoughts on the development of such normative scholarship. "A properly designed legal system," Skeel explained, must "play a double game: it should restrain the worst wrongs of the citizenry, but at the same time not give unbridled discretion to regulators and prosecutors."<sup>185</sup> Skeel also cautioned against "the perils of symbolic lawmaking," warning that "laws need to have consequences" to be compatible with the rule of law.<sup>186</sup>

These insights may assist evangelicals, environmentalists and others concerned about the appropriate response to climate change. Both sides within the evangelical debate have been cautious regarding the types of regulation that should be enacted, at least compared to some of the other proposals for combating climate change. Most proposed laws target electric utilities, auto manufacturers and other large businesses whose activities result in more greenhouse gases being emitted into the air. But, as Michael Vandenberg has demonstrated so well, much of today's pollution is the result of the cumulative actions of millions of individuals.<sup>187</sup> Laws that fail to regulate those individuals—i.e., all of us—may simply be symbolic; laws that do regulate those individuals may encounter the same difficulties in changing behavior that Steel and Stuntz warned about. The application of such principles should be preceded by further study of precisely what qualifies as a Christian theory of jurisprudence.

---

182. See David A. Skeel, Jr. & William J. Stuntz, *Christianity and the (Modest) Rule of Law*, 8 U. PA. J. CONST. L. 809 (2006).

183. *Id.* at 828.

184. *Id.* at 839.

185. Skeel, *supra* note 29, at 36.

186. *Id.* at 38.

187. Michael P. Vandenberg, *From Smokestack to SUV: The Individual as Regulated Entity in the New Era of Environmental Law*, 57 VAND. L. REV. 515, 529–33 (2004).

### III. LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The climate change debate has introduced environmentalists to evangelicals in a way that previous environmental issues never accomplished. This new familiarity between the two groups has implications for each of them. For traditional environmentalist constituencies, it is important to understand the unique perspective that evangelicals bring to environmental concerns. Some of the questions involving science and law are familiar to debates about environmental law, but certain aspects of those questions are affected by the special evangelical experience. Evangelicals also bring an emphasis upon the moral implications of environmental law that has been downplayed in recent years in favor of economic and administrative concerns. Other legal scholars, such as Amy Sinden, have recognized the moral dimensions of climate change, and the theological insights of evangelicals can add to those discussions.<sup>188</sup> Evangelicals also have unique perspectives on the economic and political questions that have long dominated environmental law. It is important that there be discussion—a dialog between environmentalists and evangelicals—rather than a mere strategic political calculation of how to gain support from other groups for preferred policies.

For many evangelicals, climate change has presented the first occasion for them to consider the difficult questions presented by environmental law. The debate has crystallized evangelical thinking. It has confirmed the need to fulfill the biblical commands enjoining care for God's creation. It has revealed the different theological, scientific and jurisprudential perspectives that exist within the evangelical community. It has, in short, demonstrated the difficulty of moving from agreement on biblical teaching to deciding appropriate public policies.

I promised that this paper would be descriptive rather than normative, but I do not want to be too coy. My tentative view is that climate change is not the most pressing environmental problem today. I would rank the need for clean water supplies in the developing world first, with climate change bunched with issues such as air pollution in Asia and the global loss of biodiversity as next in priority. Of course, each of those environmental problems is related, and climate change could affect them all under some scenarios of the future. At the same time, it appears that many lives can be saved in Africa, Asia and elsewhere by targeting such simple solutions as new domestic water supplies or shifting to less polluting fuels for residential heating and local uses.

Even so, decisive action against the emission of greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change is appropriate. There are many reasons why air pollution is bad, and a broad understanding of "pollution," like that ex-

---

188. See Amy Sinden, *Climate Change and Human Rights* (Social Science Research Network, Working Paper No. 984266, May 1, 2007), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=984266>.

plored by the late anthropologist Dame Mary Douglas, holds promise for environmental law's response to pollution claims of all sorts.<sup>189</sup> Gordon College Professor Richard Wright supported policies to reduce fossil-fuel use as early as 1995 in part "because other societal benefits would result, such as reducing pollution and reducing our dependence on Middle East oil."<sup>190</sup> Moreover, the attention given to the relation of human activities to climate change is a red herring. If climate change is harmful, we should reduce it regardless of the extent to which we caused it. We have invested enormous resources to avoid other natural disasters such as floods and earthquakes, so why not climate change? As one pastor preached, "No matter what has caused the earth's temperature to elevate, the result is hurting creation and devastating people's lives."<sup>191</sup>

The ideal nature of that response is beyond the scope of this paper, save to note that some of the arguments described above should be considered in formulating that response. We need to provide energy to the poor without causing climate change. That could mean the greater use of solar, wind, hydro and nuclear power, even though they each present their own environmental concerns. The market approach, favored by both the ECI and the ISA, counsels that we should be careful about the government picking and choosing losers through subsidies, as my own experience researching new technologies during the last energy crisis also demonstrates.<sup>192</sup> The ECI and Calvin Beisner also emphasize techniques for adapting to climate change, rather than only trying to prevent it.<sup>193</sup>

Finally, evangelicals champion two ideas that are especially important in addressing climate change. First, the law cannot solve all of our problems. Professors Skeel and Stuntz provided a valuable service by beginning to sketch how jurisprudence can be informed by Christian teaching, and further work on that project is essential. The second idea is that legal disputes should be conducted with humility and civility. As the NAE put it, "we must practice humility and cooperation to achieve modest and attainable goals for the good of society. We must take care to employ the language of civility and to avoid denigrating those with whom we disagree."<sup>194</sup> The climate change debate will be worthwhile if it simply teaches us that.

---

189. See John Copeland Nagle, *The Idea of Pollution* (Notre Dame Legal Studies Paper No. 07-05, 2007), available at <http://ssrn.com/abstract=969681>.

190. CREATION AT RISK?, *supra* note 102, at 64 (statement of Richard Wright).

191. Posting of Tri Robinson, A Christian Perspective and a Call to Action, <http://letstendthegarden.org/essays/global1.htm> (last visited Dec. 22, 2007).

192. See JOHN C. NAGLE ET AL., REGIONAL SOCIOECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF TAR SANDS DEVELOPMENT IN UTAH (Argonne Nat'l Lab. Rep. ed., 1983).

193. See THE EVANGELICAL CLIMATE INITIATIVE, *supra* note 157, at 1 (endorsing "adaptation and mitigation assistance to least-developed countries" and "research into adaptation and mitigation measures for low-income households in the U.S. and the poor in least-developed countries"); Beisner, *Biblical Principles*, *supra* note 50, at 17 (calling for measures to help the poor to adapt to climate change and other threats, including providing "reliable, affordable energy").

194. NAT'L ASS'N OF EVANGELICALS, *supra* note 2, at 4.